

Message Text

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: EAGR, BU
SUBJECT: BULGARIAN CROP SUFFERS SERIOUS LOSSES

1. IN MID- AND LATE JUNE VARIOUS SECTIONS OF BULGARIA WERE HARD HIT BY SEVERE RAIN AND HAIL STORMS WHICH RESULTED IN CONSIDERABLE DAMAGE TO AGRICULTURAL CROPS. ALMOST ALL MAJOR AGRICULTURAL AREAS WERE AFFECTED BY THE SERIES OF STORMS. MOST EXTENSIVE DAMAGE OCCURRED IN THE DANUBE BASIN, ALTHOUGH KYUSTENDIL, PAZARDZHIK, PLOVDIV, STARA ZAGORA AND YAMBOL ALSO REPORTED LOSSES. REPORTED LOSSES SO FAR TOTAL MORE THAN \$300 MILLION. ACCORDING TO ONE BULGARIAN OFFICIAL, LOSSES TO GRAPES AND TOMATOES ALONE EXCEED \$65 MILLION. MAJOR EFFORTS ARE CURRENTLY UNDERWAY TO SALVAGE AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE AND TO PREPARE THE FIELDS FOR A SECOND CROP. LACK OF EQUIPMENT, FERTILIZER, MANPOWER, TRANSPORTATION, AND STORAGE FACILITIES WILL HAMPER THESE EFFORTS.

2. MAIN DAMAGE APPEARS TO HAVE BEEN DONE TO FRUITS AND TOMATOES; HOWEVER, OTHER CROPS EVIDENTLY WERE AFFECTED. ACCORDING TO PRESS REPORTS, MAJOR EMPHASIS OF SECOND CROP WILL BE ON CORN (FOR SILAGE), POTATOES, AND VEGETABLES.
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3. SPECIAL SESSION OF COUNCIL OF MINISTERS MET JUNE 30 AND, UNDER PARTY LEADER ZHIVKOV'S SIGNATURE, ISSUED DECREE AIMED AT RECOUPING LOSSES. MAIN THRUST OF PROGRAM WILL BE MOBILIZATION OF ALL AVAILABLE LABOR (WORKERS WILL BE REQUIRED TO GIVE ONE SATURDAY IN JULY AND AGAIN IN AUGUST TO WORK IN THE FIELDS) TO REPLANT 6.6 MILLION DECARES OF

AFFECTED LAND. A SPECIAL COMMITTEE UNDER RECENTLY APPOINTED AGRICULTURE MINISTER STOICHKOV WAS NAMED TO OVERSEE THESE EFFORTS.

4. PRESS CAMPAIGN PRESENTLY UNDERWAY STRESSES THEME THAT MUCH WORK MUST BE DONE TO "COMPENSATE" THE NATION FOR RECENT LOSSES. OTHER THEME IS AIMED AT ASSURING POPULACE THAT SECOND CROP WILL BE MORE THAN ADEQUATE TO MEET THE COUNTRY'S NEEDS AND THAT THERE WILL BE NO SHORTAGES OF FOODSTUFFS LATER ON.

5. COMMENT: CROP DAMAGES COME AT PARTICULARLY BAD TIME FOR BULGARIA. LAST YEAR AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION FELL 6.3 PERCENT; ANTICIPATED PRODUCTION INCREASE FOR CURRENT YEAR WAS ONLY 5.0 PERCENT, WHICH NOW ALMOST CERTAINLY WILL NOT BE MET. TWO SUCCESSIVE CROP FAILURES WILL BE HEAVY BLOW TO TIGHT BULGARIAN ECONOMY AND THE ALREADY HARD-PRESSED CONSUMER, NOT TO MENTION BULGARIA'S HARD CURRENCY SITUATION. ACCORDING TO VISITING US BUSINESSMAN WITH CONTACTS IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE, OFFICIALS THERE ARE CONCERNED THAT WITHOUT IMPORTS OF FEEDGRAINS, LIVESTOCK PROGRAM WILL SUFFER WITHIN THE NEXT YEAR.

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